

How Are We Changed by Beholding God?

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | September 25, 2009



I would love for you to discuss in depth, the psychological aspects of “by beholding we become changed”. How wrong concepts of God will eventually damage our thinking skills.

What an insightful question. Let’s consider several Bible passages:

- You will know the truth and the truth will set you free. John 8:32
- The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14
- And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord... 2Cor 3:18
- Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 1John 3:2

A critical principle to recognize from these passages is that only by seeing, comprehending, and recognizing the truth about God’s glory (which is His character), is it possible to experience grace and

truth. It is through the avenue of “seeing” the truth about God that wins us to trust and opens the mind to the working of the Holy Spirit. In other words, it is by “seeing” the truth about God, as revealed in Jesus, that we receive God’s healing grace and truth. Those who reject the truth about God’s character of love, those who accept a different version of God’s character – such as a stern judge, one who inflicts eternal penalties etc. obstruct the experience of God’s grace and truth, for it is by seeing His glory that we are healed.

The Bible is teaching more than just a change in cognitive understanding or psychological reorganization. What we believe has power over us, power to heal and power to destroy. When we see the truth about God, believe that truth, internalize that truth the change in understanding causes a change in brain function. The anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), where we experience love, compassion, empathy, other-centered regard, grows stronger as we see, meditate and comprehend the character of God as revealed in Jesus. This growth corresponds with increased sense of peace and wellness, reduced firing of the brain’s fear center, reductions in stress hormones and inflammatory factors and better health here and now. Further, these changes result in brain rewiring and alteration in gene expression. We are changed physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually when we come into the knowledge of God as revealed in Jesus.

Conversely, god concepts that diverge from the truth Jesus revealed result in damage to the ACC, inflammation of fear circuitry and increased stress response with worsening health. The increased stress response, resulting from holding to lies about God, shuts off the production of brain proteins which keep the brain healthy. Further, white supporting cells are damaged with subsequent damage to neurons. This combined effect results in loss of brain tissue in critical memory regions and reasoning centers of the brain. In other words, holding to wrong God concepts impairs healthy thinking and reasoning.

Jesus came to bring us the truth about God. As we accept the truth and reject the lies, we open the heart in trust and participate in God’s healing power and experience change in character, biology and psychology and mental efficiency and are prepared to meet Jesus, for “we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” 1John 3:2